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DECORATION & FURNITURE

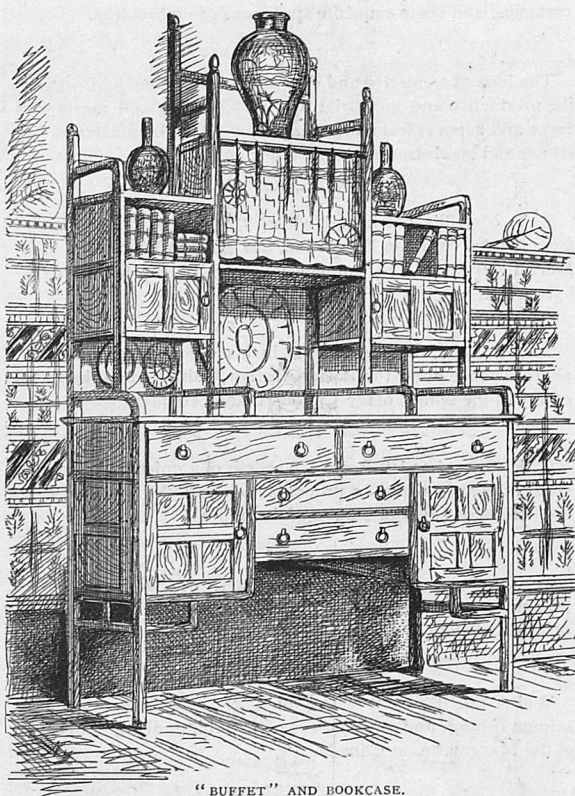
AN EXQUISITE PARISIAN MANSION.



CENTRALLY situated in the Champs Elysées, on the left-hand side, between the "Rond Point" and the Arc de Triomphe, there is a house, slightly in the rear of the other buildings, which for years has attracted the notice of the public, but about which little or nothing has been written. It is known as "l'Hôtel de Païva." It may be remarked "en passant" that the term "hôtel," so frequently met with in French cities, does not, as the traveled reader will know, necessarily mean a house of public entertainment; but is often used, as in the present instance, to designate a private residence of considerable dimensions. In the whole world, it is safe to say there is no residence on which more skill, more art, or more money combined, have been expended than on this exquisite "bonbonnière," built by a prince to enshrine his lady-love.

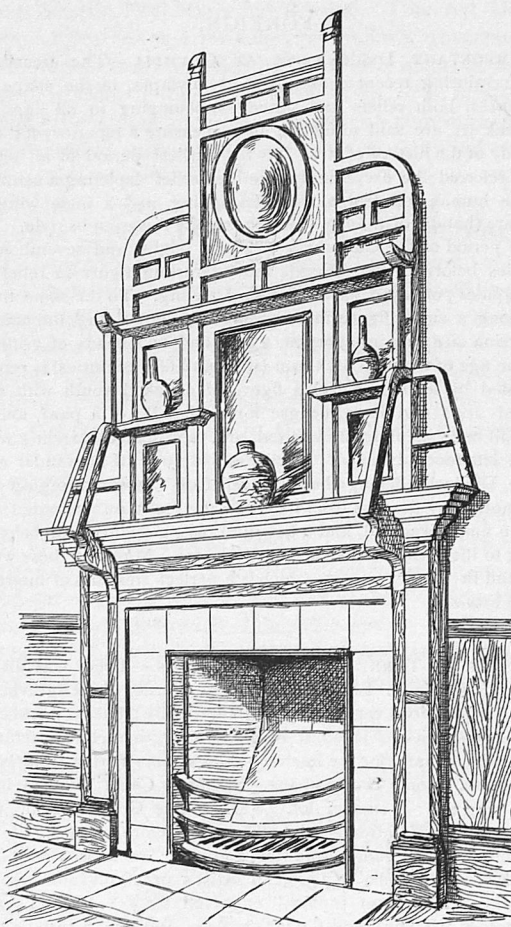
The entire structure, from the door-knob to the weather-vane, from the servant's hall in the basement to the garret, is strictly of the order of Louis XIII. It was erected, furnished, and decorated under the direction of Barbedienne, the prince of manufacturers of, and dealers in, "Objets d'Art," who, although a man of low extraction, acquired such a reputation that the Empress Eugénie, it is said, consulted him not only on matters of furniture and decoration, but even on matters of dress and personal adornment. As seen from the street, the mansion is unassuming in appearance. A low wall, in which are two large doors, runs on a line with the neighboring buildings, the top of the wall forming the edge of a terrace twenty-four feet wide, ornamented with a wealth of tropical foliage. As we enter by the "porte cochère" nearest the "Rond Point" we come upon a drive level with the sidewalk, traversing the house, and leading to the stables and coach-house in the rear. It was through this pathway that the writer has often seen the countess's well-known team of four coal-black horses, valued at twenty thousand dollars, attached to an open carriage "à huit ressorts," lined with yellow satin, pass out on the way to the Bois de Boulogne, where they would be sure to attract more attention than any other equipage in the park, not excepting that of the Emperor or Empress. Midway in the carriage-road through the house a rather abrupt flight of steps brings you to the centre of the vestibule, which has a massive vaulted roof in stone, from the key of which hangs a superb lantern in wrought brass of the most exquisite workmanship. Back of this hall is the staircase. A spiral stairway of elegant and graceful curve occupies the centre of the house, which is only two stories high, but is capped with a heavy roof, under which is ample accommodation for the numerous retinue of servants who wait on my lady. The steps and balusters are of solid onyx, cut from the quarries near Constantine in Algeria, and the walls are of panels of black and Sienna marbles. The light comes from a skylight, and as it strikes the almost translucent marble of the steps, the effect is marvelously beautiful. On the Champs Elysées, or front side of the house, is the "grand salon," about forty feet long, terminating at one end in a small reception room, and at the other in the "boudoir de madame." This latter is exquisite, with its decorations in lavender and white "en camaieu," and its gold and lavender satin furniture. The ceiling forms a dome from which at night a sweet, soft light is diffused through frosted rose-tinted glass. The "grand salon" has four large windows extending to the floor, in each one of which is a jardinière in cloisonné enamel on a tripod of black bronze rubbed with gold. The mantel, which is very high, is in gryotte marble, the top forming what is known as an Italian fronton. The central part is cut out, and the ends make two volutes, on which recline marvelously carved figures in white marble representing Night and Day, executed by Carrier-Belleuze. On the mantel stands a vase in red marble and cloisonné

enamel made by Barbedienne, and it is flanked on either side by a huge red marble vase with bouquets for twenty-five candles. The bases are of marble, and the mountings are in silvered bronze decorated with medallions in Limoges enamel. The only other pair of the kind



"BUFFET" AND BOOKCASE.

that has been made stands in the stately mansion of one of our American mercantile grandes on Brooklyn Heights. The ceiling, in strict accordance with the style of the Louis XIII. period, is divided into "caissons" by transverse beams of oak and gold; but the



MANTELPiece WITH SHELVES.

cornices, which are very deep, contain four chef-d'œuvres by Baudry, there being one on each side of the room, representing, respectively, Night, Day, Dawn and Twilight. Three chandeliers in gilt and silvered bronze depend from the ceiling, the centre one with one hun-

dred and twenty-five candles, and the two others with seventy-five lights each. Brackets on the walls, in red cloisonné enamel and gold, furnish supplementary light. The hangings and furniture are of iron gray silk, with an appliqué pattern in flame-colored satin of Persian design.

The dining-room, in the rear, is furnished in oak and ebony. The panels of the doors each consist of one plaque of Limoges enamel painted by a celebrated French artist. The walls above the wainscoting are of faïence, as is also the ceiling which represents in bas relief the Diana by Jean Goujon. The chandelier, in polished bronze, instead of hanging from the ceiling in the centre of the room, which would mar the effect of the faïence centre-piece, is supported by four rods coming from the corners of the room and uniting at the point of suspension. On one side of the dining-room is a smoking-room in exquisite oriental style.

Immediately over the salon is the bedroom of the countess. The furniture is of ebony inlaid with ivory and silver. The ceiling is composed of a honeycomb of small arches all terminating in ornamental knobs; from the central one, which is lower than the others, hangs a night-lamp composed of an openwork plateau supporting eight small lights and one large central one, encased in enameled glass. Above is an openwork dome in hammered brass hung by silken cords corresponding in color with the furniture and hangings, which are of purple and silver. From each one of the lamps hangs a tassel of white Llama wool trimmed with the same colors. On one of the walls is a large Venetian mirror, framed in bronze, which cost over three thousand dollars. On the dressing table is a toilet set which is one of the marvels of modern handicraft; it cost fifty thousand dollars. It is of ducat gold, and consists of a basin and ewer, two puff-boxes, and a ring tray; the design is Persian, and the decoration is in raised bands of gold in "repoussé" work. On this are mounted small sapphires "en cailloutis"—that is to say, touching each other, and the centre of each decorative motive is occupied alternately by a ruby and a diamond. The handle of the ewer is an elephant's tusk inlaid with gold. Constant Sévin designed the set, which was executed by Désiré Attarge, both artists being in the employ of Barbedienne.

Next to the bedroom is the bath room. The bathtub is of "onyx bouchonné," imported on purpose from California, and lined with silver; the taps are of gold. Before the window, which is of ground glass, is a slab of marble bearing a shallow imprint of the human form on which the bather may lie down and receive a perfumed spray from a series of perforated silver tubes above. The necessary furniture and fittings are of sandal wood inlaid with round pieces of mosaic-like work made of silver and bone and ivory, such as we often see among the curiosities brought from the East Indies.

Over the dining-room, in the rear, is the library in maroon velvet and ebony with bronze trimmings. The most noticeable piece of furniture is a bookcase with glass doors, the frame being of ebony. The lower panel of each case reproduces in bronze one of the panels of the doors of the Baptistery at Florence, the masterpiece of Ghiberti. This bookcase alone cost six thousand dollars. Other rooms less conspicuously furnished occupy the rest of the floor.

Art treasures are scattered about the house too numerous even to mention. In the boudoir a set of clock and candelabra in silver of the most exquisite workmanship of the time of Louis XVI. stands on the mantel. Gérôme's celebrated painting of "Cleopatra Before Cæsar" was painted to order for this house, and as it was to be used as a screen, it was painted on silk. When it was finished Madame de Païva was not satisfied with it, and refused to take it. Gérôme then had it backed with canvas, and sold it to an American for five thousand francs more than the original price agreed upon for it.

Fantastical as some of these details may seem, they are exact, and it will be long before New York, with all its luxury, can boast of a dwelling where money and exquisite taste are so closely united as they are in this marvelous "Hôtel de Païva." FRÉDÉRIC VORS.